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GE 2015 and the Malay Community: Voting Trends and Issues

This article attempts to analyse the reasons for the Malay community's seeming support for the People's Action Party (PAP) government in Singapore, in spite of online discontentment that was expressed towards the party, just prior to the elections. The article makes three main arguments: 1) the reasons explaining the community's support for PAP are similar to other Singaporeans, such as the death of founding leader Lee Kuan Yew and the risk-averse nature of the electorate; 2) institutional impediments exist with regards to the community, that heavily favour the government; and 3) the main opposition party, Workers' Party (WP), has not been able to be a viable alternative to PAP for the community, both in terms of quality of candidates and ideas.

Introduction

After the 2011 General Elections (GE) in Singapore which witnessed dramatic shift in popular support towards the opposition, it was expected that the 2015 GE would see closer electoral battles, which would then magnify the importance of the minority communities. The Malay community, comprising of 15% of the population,¹ could have been a potentially crucial voting bloc in the case of such contests. However, the People's Action Party (PAP) government marched to an unexpectedly resounding victory. In the aftermath of the results, the ruling party's Minister in-charge of Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, promptly declared that PAP's triumph amply demonstrated that the Malay/Muslim community supports the government since it has benefitted tremendously from 50 years of PAP rule.² While it is difficult to fully ascertain the veracity of the claim considering the absence of explicit data on voting by the different ethnic groups, it would be reasonable to assume that PAP's claim is largely true: in the 10 Group Representation Constituencies where a Malay candidate is required to be fielded, and therefore in which there are significant Malay populations, PAP attained about 68% of the valid votes.³ This is similar to the national percentage of 70% of the vote share for PAP, indicating that the Malay voting pattern was similar to that of the other races'.

This article attempts to analyse the issues pertaining to the Malay community, and to explain the plausible reasons for the support that the community seemingly provided to PAP. I put forth several arguments: firstly, the reasons for the Malay community's support for the government are similar to the other ethnic communities; secondly, in spite of a marked improvement in the quality of some of the opposition Malay candidates, there are institutional impediments that limit their ability to defeat PAP candidates; and finally, the main opposition party, the Workers' Party (WP), has failed to provide a viable alternative for the Malay community, both in terms of candidates and plans.

Malays in Singapore: A Brief Look

The Malay community is the largest ethnic minority group in Singapore. Apart from comprising a substantial portion of the voting bloc, the Malays are constitutionally recognized as the indigenous inhabitants of the land.⁴ The importance of managing the Malay community from the state's perspective is exacerbated by the fact that Singapore is surrounded by larger Malay countries, whom have at times been antagonistic towards the city-state (Huxley 1991). The Malays are overwhelmingly Muslim, and hence when the state deals with the Malays, they are in fact dealing with Islam, and vice-versa. It has been argued that "Malay" and "Muslim" or "Islam" are so intertwined that they are often conflated in the context of Singapore politics (Kadir 2004). Since independence, Malays have not fared as well the other races in socio-economic terms. Whether the position of the Malays are due to institutional or cultural factors (or both) is the point of contention in this essay; I just wish to highlight that the Malays' socio-economic standing is viewed as a huge problem for the state as it could be a potent source of discontentment, if not managed carefully. There has also been a resurgence in Islamic consciousness amongst the Malays in Singapore: Islam is becoming more and more central to the lives of many Malays and while in

general, this manifests itself in mundane terms, there have been cases of “self-radicalized” Muslims or those who join terrorist organizations. The competitive authoritarian state of Singapore seeks to manage religion in general, and the Malays/Muslims specifically, in various ways: both legal, draconian measures and softer tactics such as co-optation of religious organizations, so as to mitigate this rise in religious fervour (Abdullah 2013). There is a Minister of Muslim Affairs in the cabinet, who acts as the bridge between the community and the government, and before the 2011 GE, there had been not a single opposition Malay/Muslim parliamentarian.

These are the contextual factors that need to be taken into account before embarking on any socio-political analyses of the Malay community.

Explaining Malay Support for PAP

Prior to the GE, it was difficult to gauge the level of Malay support for the government. On one hand, the state-controlled Malay daily, *Berita Harian*, which is the only Malay newspaper in the country, covered the PAP Malay candidates to a severely disproportionate extent, ignoring many of their opposition counterparts. On the other, social media was rife with many complaints and comments about the government’s alleged mistreatment of Malays and Islam. Perhaps the most prominent issue that was discussed online was the *hijab* issue: there was an online petition asking for the government to reverse its ban on the *hijab* for public school uniforms, hospitals (nurses) and the uniformed services.

Yet, the GE results evidently showed that online discontentment was not reflective of the general sentiment amongst Singaporeans and the Malay community. I posit several arguments for this: firstly, the risk-averse nature of Singaporean voters, including Malays; secondly, the effects of Lee Kuan Yew’s death on voters; thirdly, the ‘carrots’ offered by PAP; fourthly, the near-total

domination of the key Malay/Muslim institutions by the ruling party; and finally, the failure of WP to appeal to the Malays.

Risk-Averse Nature of Singaporeans and Malays

What is referred to here by ‘risk aversion’ is in political terms: I contend that Singaporeans in general, prefer PAP to be in power. While many do wish to see oppositional presence in Parliament, they do not desire PAP’s demise. Even in terms of opposition parties, Singaporeans have displayed a clear unwillingness for a radical departure from PAP: the fact that WP is the best performing opposition party in both GE 2011 and GE 2015, and not SDP, demonstrates the electorate’s conservativeness and their inclination towards something familiar. WP is a party which is similar to PAP, whereas SDP propagates a left-leaning ideology, with a heavy focus on political and individual freedoms, and substantially differs from both PAP and WP (Da Cunha 2012).

GE 2011 was the election wherein the incumbent performed the worst in its history, since independence. The opposition managed to snatch a hitherto formidable Group Representation Constituency (GRC) from PAP, and attained 40% of the popular vote. Evidently, the psychological barrier of winning a GRC was breached by the opposition; and perhaps, this had an adverse effect with regards to opposition chances of making more gains in 2015, on the voters. Hence, when both WP and SDP were perceived to be doing extremely well during the hustings, as adjudged by the huge turnouts at their rallies, the thought of a ‘freak election’ – whereby PAP would lose power despite the people wanting them to be the government, as voters became complacent and chose opposition candidates for more representation instead – became heightened, even though the likelihood of it happening was in fact negligibly low. WP built on its 2011 success and fielded

many candidates of high quality, including Associate Professor Daniel Goh, a sociologist from National University of Singapore (NUS). But what was more surprising was SDP, led by the enigmatic Dr Chee Soon Juan, a long-time opponent of PAP who had been bankrupted after lawsuits by senior PAP leaders. He managed to transform his reputation from a political rebel to serious contender. What was perhaps even more impressive was the party's new candidate, Professor Anand Tambyah, a medical doctor, who articulated well-thought out plans for healthcare reforms. Middle-ground voters (voters who are neither staunch supporters nor opponents of the government) were then possibly repulsed by the possibility of a freak election and turned to PAP. The possibility of a 'freak election' had been mooted by many government-linked individuals, including Minister for National Development, Khaw Boon Wan.⁵ Since 2011 had proved that the opposition was indeed capable of winning a GRC, the idea of a freak election suddenly became plausible to many voters, like it had never been before. For the Malay community, the notion that the Malays had "progressed" and benefitted tremendously from PAP rule was the theme of the hustings. Dr Yaacob urged the Malays to vote in a "wise and rational" manner in order for their futures to be secure, implying a tenuous future ahead if the opposition was in charge.⁶ Minister in Prime Minister's Office, Masagos Zulkifli, had stated that the Malay MPs were "vanguards" for the Muslim community;⁷ emphasising the importance of the quality of the candidates in determining not just the socio-economic well-being of the community, but also, in protecting the religious-cultural elements. Just like the other communities, the concept of a 'freak election' was real to the Malays; the possibility of them losing the leadership that had brought much socio-economic gains and had hitherto been the protectors of their ethno-religious rights could have swayed the middle-ground voters towards PAP.

Lee Kuan Yew's Death: A Nostalgic Reminder of PAP's Achievements

It would be no exaggeration to suggest that the death of Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, in March 2015 had a profound effect on the elections. The outbreak of emotions during Lee's funeral, which was described as a national tragedy, was unprecedented in city-state's history. Undoubtedly, the state-controlled media played a huge part in aggrandizing the week-long event, but to state that the hype was all due to the media would be unfair to Singaporeans. Ordinary citizens from all walks of life and across the political spectrum turned up in droves to pay their last respects to the statesman. Many Malays were seen crying at his funeral, as were the other Singaporeans. It was not uncommon to hear Malays exhorting Lee's achievements for the community, how he was fluent in Malay and how he always cared for them.⁸ Undoubtedly, there were some Singaporeans who were ambivalent, and even celebratory, about his death, but they were by far in the minority. It was abundantly plain that the nation truly mourned with his passing. That the GE was held a few months after his death, likely contributed to PAP's resounding victory. The two above-mentioned factors, are not unique to the Malay/Muslim community: they can be used to explain the national swing in support as well. The following factors, however, are perhaps more specific to the Malay community.

'Carrots' for Malays

A strategy commonly employed by PAP nearing every GE is the distribution of 'carrots', usually involving, but not restricted to, financial and material incentives. This GE was no different: the most significant of the carrots was the Pioneer Generation Package, a subsidized healthcare plan that cost about 9 billion dollars, and that is estimated to benefit 450 000 citizens. The scheme was introduced in 2014 to honour the pioneers of Singapore for their efforts in building the country to what it is today.⁹

There were several other initiatives, put in place after the 2011 GE, which directly targeted the Malay community. In 2012, the Tertiary Tuition Fee Scheme (TTFS) was expanded to allow more Malay students to qualify: while previously eligibility for TTFS depended on total household income, now it was based on household income per capita.¹⁰ The following year, the government extended its Edusave scheme (funds for extra-curricular activities) to Madrasah (Islamic schools) students.¹¹ These two developments are noteworthy as both issues had been raised by the community, as noted by PM Lee himself, for many years, but it was only after 2011 that they were implemented.¹² At the National Day Rally in 2014, Lee announced that a new mosque would be built and named after the first President of the country, Yusof Ishak, and likewise, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies would be re-named after him.¹³ Just before GE 2015, Lee stated that madrasahs would be receiving increased financial support from the government in its teaching of secular subjects.¹⁴ In another ‘first’ for the community, PAP appointed two sitting Malay/Muslim ministers in one cabinet for the first time since independence, with Masagos’ promotion to a full Minister in April 2015.¹⁵

PAP displayed a vigour in their efforts to court Malay votes, via these carrots, to the extent of altering long-held policies. This stratagem evidently reflected the government’s thinking that Malay votes could have been potentially decisive, in fiercely-contested electoral battles.

Near-total control over Malay/Muslim Institutions

It is true that PAP retains dominance over many institutions throughout the country: the party’s preponderance can to a large extent be explained by its control of institutions including the trade unions, grassroots organizations, mass media, bureaucracy, and the legislature. However, for the Malay/Muslim community, there is an added layer of authority. There are three organizations

that are crucial to the community: the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), Council for the Development of Singapore Malay/Muslim Community (Mendaki), and the aforementioned *Berita Harian*. These organizations, I argue, serve to perpetuate the ruling party's dominance over the Malay/Muslim community.

MUIS is undoubtedly the most important Islamic organization in Singapore. The position of MUIS as the pre-eminent Muslim organization in the land is guaranteed by the constitution of Singapore (K. Y. Tan 2015, 155). MUIS has jurisdiction over many matters pertaining to the Islamic faith. The Mufti, the highest Islamic authority who issues religious edicts, is part of the organization. Apart from being the definitive authority over jurisprudential matters, MUIS also has significant influence over numerous administrative issues, such as the provision of hajj services, the distribution of *halal* (Islamically permissible) certificates for food and beverage companies and stall owners, the administration of *waqf* (religious endowment) properties, and many more. Three of the six full-time madrasahs (Islamic religious schools) are under the direct purview of MUIS.¹⁶ Each Friday, mosques in Singapore would normally utilize the sermon written by MUIS in their delivery of the sermons during Friday prayers, which are attended by a substantial portion of the male Muslim population. It is difficult to imagine an aspect of the Muslim life in Singapore that is not directly or indirectly penetrated by MUIS.

MUIS is an arm of the state, under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY). As per the Constitution, the President of Singapore appoints the President of MUIS and the Mufti, at the advice of the Minister of Muslim Affairs. Here we can see the interventionist nature of the state in this arrangement. While undoubtedly, there have been occasions where MUIS has disagreed openly with the state, it is equally undeniable that the relationship between the two can largely be characterized as a compliant one on the part of MUIS. The state, I argue, utilizes MUIS so as to

achieve its socio-political objectives. This is not to take away the agency of the actors within MUIS; I argue that MUIS willingly allows itself to be co-opted in order to reap benefits for both the organization and the Muslim community as a whole. Whatever the motivations, it is evident that the co-optation of MUIS does strengthen the state. After Lee's death, the Friday sermon included praise of the statesman's legacy, something almost unprecedented in the community's history. The fact that the state has successfully included MUIS into its apparatus has effectively sealed the door for sustained religious opposition to any of the state's policies, at an institutional level.¹⁷

Dr Maliki Osman, the Senior Minister of State for National Development and Defence, explicitly invoked the success of Muslim religious scholars, the *ulama*, during one of his election rallies. He stated that the country had witnessed a growing number of *ulama* with solid credentials in recent years, and singled out those who had attained doctorate degrees.¹⁸ While it is unclear what exactly the state had to do with the success of those scholars, it did seem that Maliki was trying to, at least indirectly, attribute the educational attainments of the *ulama* to PAP's policies. Significantly, none of the *ulama* mentioned responded to Maliki's comments in public; not even on their own social media platforms. While not all of the *ulama* in the country have been co-opted, it is fair to say that the state does not face challenges to its authority from the Islamic clergy, unlike in many other countries. The control that the state possesses over the clergy – either through direct appointments and co-optation strategies, or informal methods such as creating conditions whereby it is difficult for the *ulama* to defy the state openly – have undoubtedly ensured a smoother path for PAP to exert its influence over the Malay community. The *ulama* are traditionally an important power base in any Muslim society (Zaman 2002), and Singapore is no different. It is reasonable to presume that if there are *ulama* who openly disagree or question the state, PAP's authority would

wane at least amongst some segments in the Malay community, especially those that strongly adhere to proclamations made by religious elites. This point is strengthened by Masagos' declaration in one of his rally speeches during this campaign. He urged members of the community, presumably online critics of PAP who use religion to make the case that PAP is not the party that would protect the interests of Islam, to not 'champion Muslim issues if you are not the experts in it', and that the community must 'trust the *ulama*'.¹⁹ The message was obvious from the Minister: if the *ulama*, who are custodians of the Islamic faith (Zaman 2002), do not question PAP's credibility, then the masses have no moral or spiritual authority to do so.

Mendaki is another prominent organization in the Malay community. As self-help group initially set up by the government to improve the educational standing of Malays, the organization has since acquired greater importance, expanding its focus to include issues pertaining to youth, family and employability.²⁰ The chairman of the organization is the Minister of Muslim Affairs, and its board members usually include several Malay PAP MPs. Mendaki is responsible for the disbursement of educational scholarships, conducting of coaching programs for the unemployed and parents. By linking Mendaki to the state, the positives associated with Mendaki are by extension, indicative of the state's 'benevolence' to the Malay community: for instance, the scholarships are not only perceived to be given via Mendaki, but in fact, by the state. It is therefore common for Malay MPs to directly be involved in the handing out of scholarships to students, so as to bolster this perception.²¹ The patently partisan nature of the organization can be seen through the exclusion of Faisal Manap, WP's Malay opposition MP, from Mendaki's Community Leaders Forum (CLF). CLF is supposed to be a platform, under the purview of Mendaki, which gathers "Malay Members of Parliament, Malay Members of Parliament, community partners and activists, on strategies to enable the community to realise its shared vision for excellence."²² Interestingly,

despite its stated mission, Faisal's request to join the CLF was turned down by Yaacob, with the latter saying that CLF is a "structure created by the community for community partners, not political parties."²³ Not only does this deprive the opposition of access to decision-making, discussions and even information on community issues, it could also contribute to the perception that the opposition parties are not involved in efforts to better the community, even if this is not by their own doing.

As discussed earlier, *Berita Harian* (BH) is the only newspaper in the Malay language available in the country. While the decline of the print media is often mooted, its continued influence in Singapore cannot be denied, especially for the Malay community. Many Malays still rely on BH as a source of information. The state's monopoly over the media in Singapore is well-documented; George argues that the mass media contributes to PAP's dominance via both direct and indirect means, with the latter being self-censorship on the part of editors and journalists (George 2012). The effects of state influence on BH was particularly pronounced during the election period: there was somewhat a media "blackout" on the opposition Malay candidates. These candidates, who raised many issues that concerned the community, were not given due coverage, and the fact that they raised these issues, were not highlighted by BH. As a result, many had to rely on alternative media (such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube) to get their messages across. While BH ran an article on each of the candidates after they were introduced, they were not subsequently adequately covered, and the issues they raised were not discussed. This situation is remarkable, as even the other newspapers give more coverage to the Malay candidates.²⁴

Consider the case of Damanhuri Abas, the SDP candidate. Damanhuri was a known entity amongst Malay grassroots organizations, as he had served in many of them for about two decades, including Persatuan Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Association). During the rallies, Damanhuri raised

several issues that had long been articulated by the Malays; including the ban of the *hijab* (Islamic headscarf for females) in the nursing sector and uniformed groups, and public schools. He captured the attention of many Malays, who voiced substantial support for him online. Such was the case too for Fahmi Rais from Singaporeans First (SingFirst) and Abdillah Zamzuri from the Singapore People's Party (SPP). The online buzz these candidates raised, especially for Damanhuri, far outweighed the meagre publicity BH accorded to them. While the issues they raised were not given attention in BH, the newspaper instead published two letters to the editor on September 15, four days after the election, arguing that opposition candidates should not have raised the *hijab issue* as that would disrupt the ongoing negotiations between the community and the state, and that opposition parties should not “politicize” the matter.²⁵ BH's choice to publish letters that are in support of the state, and that castigate the opposition, in addition to not airing the calls made by the opposition to reverse the policy during hustings, is even more astounding considering that an online petition for the *hijab* started a few weeks before the election, garnered over 19 000 signatories.²⁶ Even the state commissioned *Suara Musyarawah* (Conversations with the Community) Committee, noted that many Malays raised the issue of nurses not being able to don the *hijab* as a point of concern.²⁷ BH's partial coverage of the issue, and the candidates who raised it, is telling. In sharp contrast, PAP Malay candidates were featured daily, with several articles and pages devoted to them each day. Bearing in mind that readership of BH is estimated to be around 226 000 (and 260 000 for the Sunday edition), which is about half of the total Malay population, BH thus remains a severe institutional impediment to their chances of seeking to be elected.²⁸

Failure of WP to Appeal to the Malays

Aside from Damanhuri, and to a lesser extent Fahmi Rais and Zamzuri, and WP's Faisal Manap who had the advantage of incumbency in Aljunied GRC and the exposure one prior term

in Parliament gave him, it can be argued that none of the Malay opposition candidates stood out, or had grassroots credibility with the community.²⁹ However, it was WP that was most affected by this failure: the other parties were not really up to par in general, with PAP, and it was WP which was expected to pose the fiercest contests. While that was eventually the case, WP's efforts were not to capture more GRCs. In East Coast GRC, where the election battle was expected to be the closest, with many pundits predicting that WP might wrest the constituency from PAP, WP managed to gain only 39% of the votes. In an area with a substantial Malay minority, the fact that PAP's Malay candidate was clearly more impressive than WP's likely contributed to the high margin of victory. Maliki Osman represented PAP, and apart from his governmental positions, Maliki is known to be an eloquent speaker with rather stellar educational achievements (he was an Assistant Professor at NUS). Compared to WP's Fairoz Shariff, who was an unknown quantity in the Malay community, and who did not perform too well in the delivery of rally speeches, PAP had a clear advantage. This is an all-too familiar scenario for WP: in 1988, in the hotly-fought Eunos GRC, the WP team garnered 49.1% of the votes. It consisted of Dr Lee Siew-Choh, a veteran opposition politician; Francis Seow, a former Solicitor-General; and Khalid Babu, a comedian. Siew-Choh and Seow were extremely strong candidates, and it is judicious to assume that had they had a more credible Malay candidate in their slate, they would have defeated the PAP team. The inability of the opposition, and particularly WP, to attract outstanding Malay candidates, has been a longstanding problem (Tan 2013).

Apart from the incumbent government Malay MPs, the newer candidates fielded by PAP boasted notable credentials too. Two of them, Rahayu Mahzam and Amrin Amin, are successful lawyers; Saktiandi Supaat is a renowned economist, while the losing Malay candidate in PAP's team in Aljunied, Shamsul Kamar, was a Head of Department in a local secondary school. In addition, the

candidates also had prior grassroots exposure as they were involved in Residents' Committees and Malay/Muslim organizations to increase their visibility; an advantage that only PAP candidates could have. Besides Damanhuri of SDP, none of the opposition candidates were more familiar to the Malay community than their PAP counterparts.

It is also noteworthy that while SDP was upfront about its plans for the Malay community, and released a policy paper pertaining to it³⁰, WP was more reticent in this regard and did not propose a comprehensive plan for the Malays. Until WP can rectify this, and the issue of the caliber of their Malay candidates vis-à-vis PAP's, it is unlikely that it will be able to overcome the latter's dominance of the Malay/Muslim vote.

Conclusion

It is evident from the discussion that several institutional obstacles stand in the way of opposition parties being able to penetrate PAP's dominance, especially with regards to the Malay/Muslim vote. At the same time, opposition parties, especially WP, have to be honest to themselves and conduct some self-introspection; and acknowledge that PAP has been successful in recruiting Malay candidates of a much higher caliber. WP also has to bolder in proposing comprehensive alternative plans for the Malay community, if it has ambitions of challenging PAP on a more equal footing.

The GE results unquestionably represent an endorsement of PAP policies. While this could mean that PAP is in a greater position to enact reform, or democratize through the position of strength (Slater 2012), it could also mean that there is no incentive to do things differently. In the same vein, it remains to be seen whether the results give the PAP leadership greater confidence to pursue reforms in its approach towards the Malay/Muslim community, or status quo will ensue. One

suspects the latter is more likely, considering the trajectory of the relationship between the state and the community, in the past 50 years.

¹ National Population and Talent Division, "2014 Population in Brief." <http://www.nptd.gov.sg/portals/0/news/population-in-brief-2014.pdf>. Accessed 17 September 2015.

² See the press conference held by PAP leaders after the victory. Channel NewsAsia facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ChannelNewsAsiaSingapore/videos/10153136935757934/>. Accessed 17 September 2015.

³ These GRCs are Aljunied, Bishan-Toa Payoh, Choa Chu Kang, East Coast, Jalan Besar, Marine Parade, Marsiling-Yee Tee, Pasir Ris-Punggol, Sembawang and Tampines. Using the figures from the Elections Department website, I have arrived at this figure of 68%. See Singapore Elections Department, http://www.eld.gov.sg/election_results_2015.html. Accessed 17 September 2015.

⁴ Refer to Articles 152 and 153 of the Singapore Constitution.

⁵ Salma Khalik & Tham Yuen C, "No guarantee PAP will be in government after polls: Khaw Boon Wan," *Straits Times*, 8 September 2015.

⁶ Toh Yong Chuan, "Consider the progress Malays have made over the past 50 years under the PAP: Yaacob," *Straits Times*, 10 September 2015.

⁷ Imelda Saad, "Good group of potential Malay-Muslim candidates identified for next GE: Masagos," *Channel NewsAsia*, 22 August 2015. Accessed 21 September 2015. <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/good-group-of-potential/1938034.html>.

⁸ Nazri Hadi Saparin, "Lee Kuan Yew 1923-2015: Penghormatan Negara (National Commemoration)," *Berita Harian*, 25 March 2015.

⁹ See Pioneer Generation Website, <https://www.pioneers.sg/en-sg/Pages/Home.aspx>. Accessed 2 October 2015.

¹⁰ Mendaki, http://www.mendaki.org.sg/upload_files/cuteeditor/Document/FAQs%20for%20Mendakis%20Website%20Final%20-%20v2.pdf. Accessed 2 October 2015.

¹¹ Janice Heng, "NDR 2013: Edusave extended to include madrasah students," *Straits Times*, 19 August 2013.

¹² Prime Minister's Office, National Day Rally 2014 Speech. <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/prime-minister-lee-hsien-loongs-national-day-rally-2014-speech-english>. Accessed

¹³ Prime Minister's Office, National Day Rally 2014. <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/prime-minister-lee-hsien-loongs-national-day-rally-2014-speech-english>. Accessed 2 October 2015.

¹⁴ Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh, "National Day Rally 2015: Malay/Muslim community has made huge progress; madrasahs to get help in teaching of secular subjects," *Straits Times*, 24 August 2015.

¹⁵ He was promoted to the position of Minister in Prime Minister's Office, and after the GE, was put in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources. See Prime Minister's Office media statement, <http://www.pmo.gov.sg/mediacentre/press-statement-prime-minister-changes-cabinet-and-other-appointments-4>, 8 April 2015. Accessed 1 October 2015.

¹⁶ For a more thorough discussion on the roles of MUIS, see (C. Tan 2008) and (Musalib 2012).

¹⁷ No doubt, there may be individuals who disagree with the state's policies, institutionally, the co-optation of MUIS has ensured the state dominance over religious institutions. Furthermore, these individuals are few and far between.

¹⁸ MediaCorp, "Dr Maliki: Kepentingan Melayu/Islam amat dekat di hati PAP (Malay/Muslim interests are close to the PAP's heart)," <http://berita.mediacorp.sg/mobilem/singapore/dr-maliki-kepentingan/2115292.html>. Accessed 2 October 2015.

¹⁹ MediaCorp, "Masagos: Di S'pura sajalah, kepentingan agama dan budaya selalu dijaga dan diperlihara (Only in Singapore are religious and cultural interests preserved and protected)," <http://berita.mediacorp.sg/mobilem/singapore/masagos-di-s-pura-sajalah/2112416.html>. Accessed 2 October 2015.

²⁰ Yayasan Mendaki, <http://www.mendaki.org.sg/>. Accessed 2 October 2015.

²¹ At the victory press conference, Dr Yaacob in fact mentioned that he was slated to disburse Mendaki bursaries and scholarships the following day.

²² See Community Leaders Forum, <http://www.clfprojects.org.sg/content/our-vision--objectives.aspx>. Accessed 28 September 2015.

²³ Singapore Parliament Reports, Parliament No. 12, Session 1, Vol. 88. 20 October 2011.

²⁴ Straits Times ran an article with the headline "It's time to trust Malays more." The paper quoted Damanhuri who was making the point that the state displays some level of mistrust towards the Malays. See Walter Sim, "It's time to trust Malays more," Straits Times, 29 August 2015.

²⁵ See Forum Page of *Berita Harian*, 15 September 2015. Abdul Kadir Abdul Rahman, "Menjadikannya satu isu pilihan raya boleh jejas proses huraian (Making it an election issue could affect the process of finding a solution)," and Ramdan Sudar, "Harap tidak dipolitikkan (Hope the issue is not politicized)."

²⁶ See the petition at <https://www.change.org/p/the-singapore-government-pm-lee-hsien-loong-hijabs-to-be-allowed-in-the-singapore-workforce-specifically-in-the-uniformed-occupations-and-front-line-positions>. Accessed 29 September 2015.

²⁷ *Suara Masyarakat* (Conversations with the Community) Report, July 2013, p. 18. <https://www.change.org/p/the-singapore-government-pm-lee-hsien-loong-hijabs-to-be-allowed-in-the-singapore-workforce-specifically-in-the-uniformed-occupations-and-front-line-positions>. Accessed 29 September 2015.

²⁸ Singapore Press Holdings, Annual Report 2013, p.18.

²⁹ Mohd Nawab Mohd Osman, "Small Steps Towards Democracy in Singapore," *New Mandala*, 10 September 2015. <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2015/09/10/small-steps-towards-democracy-in-singapore/>.

³⁰ Singapore Democratic Party, "A Singapore for all Singaporeans: Addressing the Concerns of the Malay Community," http://yoursdp.org/_ld/0/10_Malays_2.0.aa.pdf. Accessed 2 October 2015.

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